United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Eleven Angolan electoral staff and four Russian crew members killed in third helicopter crash in Angola; country asks for extension of UNAVEM II until 31 December due to eventuality of second electoral round.

+ Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal agree to resume dialogue with Secretary-General in search for "just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to question of East Timor"; first meeting scheduled for December.

+ General Assembly hears address by President of Lituania; statements by Prime Minister of Malta; Chairman of Council of Ministers of Albania; Foreign Ministers of Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Syria and Australia; Deputy Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Ghana. On Friday evening, Assembly heard statements by Oman, Iceland, Swaziland, Luxembourg and Mozambique.

+ Co-chairmen of International Conference on the former Yugoslavia, Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, travel to Belgrade to hold meetings concerning United Nations protected areas and parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina; UNPROFOR reports it is now flying regularly between Zagreb and Sarajevo.

+ President of Security Council holds meeting with Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands concerning border incidents between two countries in which two citizens of the Solomon Islands were killed.

+ Secretary-General meets with Foreign Minister of Iraq to discuss Memorandum of Understanding for United Nations humanitarian assistance in that country, among other topics.

+ World Food Programme sends emergency food aid to former Yugoslavia through new trans-european canal for first time.

+ Resolutions ranging from global cooperation in nuclear safety to radiological protection and safeguards' application to verify nuclear uses adopted by thirty-sixth IAEA General Conference as it ends its

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For information media—not an official record

five-day session in Vienna.

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A third helicopter hired by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in support of the Angolan electoral process crashed on Saturday, 26 September, in the same general area where two previous crashes had occurred earlier this month. Eleven members of the Angolan electoral staff and four Russian crew members were killed in the crash. One survived.

The Russian helicopter was loaded with electoral materials, ballots and boxes, as well as twelve passengers assigned to deliver those materials. It crashed before reaching Cassangongo, on the Uige-Damba-Cassangongo route, north-east of the town of Uige.

Twelve people were injured in similar accidents in Angola on 14 and 19 September.

In a related development, Angola has asked that the activities of the United Nations Angolan Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) be extended until 31 December 1992 -- the date the Angolan Government believes to be reasonable for the conclusion of the whole process of democratization under way in that country.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 22 September, the Minister of External Relations of Angola, Pedro de Castro Van-Dunem "Loy", said the eventuality of a second electoral round could not be ruled out, in case no winner came out of the primary, scheduled for 29 and 30 September. He requested the extension of the UNAVEM II mandate in view of those uncertainties and in order to ensure a proper international assistance and monitoring of the present process as a whole.
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The Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal have agreed to resume the dialogue with the Secretary-General to search for a "just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor", under the Secretary-General's auspices. The decision was taken at a meeting with the Secretary-General, at his invitation, at Headquarters on Saturday 26 September, according to a press release issued over the weekend.

The two Foreign Ministers indicated that the dialogue would be a continuing process and that they would meet regularly. Talks would also be held between the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, but in any case the Secretary-General would participate personally or through his designated representative.

The first meeting between the Foreign Ministers and the Secretary-General will be held in December.

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Evaluating the discussions after Saturday's meeting, the Foreign Minister of Portugal, Joao de Deus Pinheiro, told the press the objective of the talks was "to let the Timorese say what they want -- that is what is called in international language, self-determination". The Portuguese Foreign Minister also said he thought the attention paid by the international community to the incident in a Santa Cruz cemetery last November and other human rights violations in East Timor, was the reason why Indonesia had now more willingly accepted these negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

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Opening this morning's General Assembly debate, Lakhdar Brahimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria, said his country was facing a crisis which should not be underestimated and which threatened the decades of achievement. An analysis of the causes of the situation was taking place, he continued, but the means, capacity and will of the Algerian people to overcome the crisis was not in doubt. External factors which were aggravating existing difficulties would not delay the efforts of the people, he said.

The delay in the implementation of the plan to hold a referendum in Western Sahara was another reason for concern, Mr. Brahimi said, calling on all the parties to redouble their efforts to resolve the problems and to move towards its implementation.

Speaking about the situation in the Middle East, the Algerian Foreign Minister expressed his Government's belief that the success of the current Arab-Israeli negotiations depended upon Israel respecting all United Nations resolutions and a global solution to the Palestinian problem -- assuring the Palestinian people of the full exercise of their rights, in their own state, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Amara Essy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, while addressing the situation in Liberia, said his Government believed that the Accord of Yamoussoukro IV offered the best means of solving the crisis in that country. However, the appearance of the United Liberation Movement had further complicated the situation, aggravating the dispute between parties already in conflict, he said.

The real problem of Africa today, he said, was financial and economic in nature. The greatest concern of developing countries was to see bodies such as the European Community take action to stabilize commodities markets, especially regarding raw materials, such as coffee and cocoa. Prices must be stabilized to ensure predictable earnings, he said. The European Community had effected such price stabilization for its own farmers. The same machinery, in Western countries, ought to be adopted internationally for stability in raw materials, he said.

"Since the second world war, the Middle East has not witnessed security or stability due to the continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and its implications", Farouk Al Shara, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Syria told the Assembly this morning. "Those who believe that a total peace can be

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achieved without a complete Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories were gravely mistaken, he said. Syria had expressed its willingness for total peace in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from those territories, but Israel had yet to respond to that challenge, he said.

The convening of the Madrid Conference in the past year had opened for the first time, a rare and historic opportunity to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, based on international legitimacy and the resolutions of the United Nations, he said. Nearly one year had passed since those talks began, the Minister said, and it was to be regretted that the last round of peace talks was concluded in Washington without the Israeli side changing the substance of its approach to the question of full withdrawal from the Golan and other occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem.

Mr. Al Shara emphasized "the readiness of Syria and the other Arab parties to commit themselves to all that is required in conformity with two Security Council resolutions 242 and 338", stressing that the claim of the Rabin Government that it had changed its policies and priorities in comparison with the Shamir Government "lacked credibility and actual application". The road to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace is clear and well-known, if Israel were really to choose this road", he concluded.

Dr. Edward Fenech-Adami, Prime Minister of Malta, told the Assembly this morning of his country's aspiration to become a full member of the European Community. He pointed out that this over-riding political objective would be a natural culmination of Malta's European identity and of the role it has played over the years in promoting European cooperation, within the Council of Europe, the Economic Commission for Europe and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

Recalling Malta's twenty-eight years of United Nations membership, he pointed out that his country had this year been gratified to see its latest initiative, related to the protection of Climate for Present and Future Generations, resulting in the signing of the framework convention on Climate Change by over 150 nations.

Turning to the issue of the United Nations system, he said that Malta shared the view that a revitalized role could be found for the Trusteeship Council as a guardian of the common heritage of future generations, to replace its fast disappearing role as a trustee of dependent territories.

In his address this afternoon, the President of Lithuania, Vytautas Landsbergis, warned that while the "evil empire" continued to fade away, "it has not vanished altogether ... it just may rise again among us and above us". Soviet communism must be condemned and attempts to restore the Soviet Union must be exposed, he said, in order to support "democratic Russia and international peace".

President Landsbergis went on to say that Democratic Russia, which condemned the 1940 Soviet annexation of Lithuania and recognized the independence of Lithuania "should not refer to the Baltic countries as 'newly

emerged' States". That campaign could best be described as "communist woodoo politics", he said.

Lithuania welcomed recently signed bilateral agreements on the withdrawal of the Russian armed forces from its territory, President Landsbergis said, and he did not doubt that the United Nations would urge that such agreements also be signed between Latvia and Russia, as well as between Estonia and Russia. He called for the close monitoring of the withdrawal so that the four States could achieve the normalization of their relationship as soon as possible.

Addressing the subject of non-military threats to security this afternoon, the Foreign Minister of Australia, Gareth Evans, said the recurring tragedy of mass starvation in Africa, often made worse by military conflict, underlined the need for the United Nations system and the Security Council to strengthen its capacity to meet the problems of potential famine.

He outlined a proposal calling for the establishment of a senior group of officials from developed and developing countries and relevant United Nations Agencies, supported by a strengthened Department of Humanitarian Affairs and a comprehensive data base, to convene regularly to conduct high level reviews of the global famine situation and identifying emerging crisis situations. Such a group, he said, would be responsible for turning pledges into timely, life-saving deliveries of food to people in need, and would report regularly to the Security Council.

Speaking on the question of preventive diplomacy, Mr. Evans said it should not be ad hoc or peripheral to the other activities of the United Nations. The crucial elements in making preventive diplomacy work, he said, were timing, adequate resources and a willingness of member States to invest the United Nations with the authority to use all means available for its effective implementation. He also welcomed the decision by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) to launch a new fellowship program in preventive diplomacy in 1993 and announced Australia's contribution of $50,000 to the Programme to assist in the fellowship's first year costs.

Kosova was one of the most delicate issues of the Yugoslav crisis, Aleksander Meksi, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Albania, pointed out this afternoon. A highly political conflict, he said, it stemmed from the impossibility of co-existence with the occupier. It was a conflict between the peaceful exercise of the principle of self-determination and "blatant hegemonistic refusal to allow this realization". The Albanian Prime Minister suggested that a negotiated solution to that problem should entail a broader direct participation in the London Conference, including the full participation of the legitimately mandated representatives of Kosova, "when their future is being discussed".

That was the only way to control various tendencies seeking to be aberrated from peaceful pursuit, he said, adding that the United Nations should intervene to enforce the implementation of measures taken or to be taken, to stand forcefully against the policy of fait accompli.

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On Albania's internal economic situation, Mr. Meksi stressed that the main goal of his Government was the establishment of the necessary legal framework to facilitate the reform, in order to harmonize the integration of the Albanian economy with the world economy.

The Deputy Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Ghana, Mohammed Ibin Chambas, said his Government supported not only the call for the write-off of debts by official creditors and commercial banks as well as multilateral institutions, but also the urgent convening of the proposed international conference on the financing of development.

Africa's overall economic output had continued to revolve around 3 per cent -- "still lagging behind the population growth", he said. The impact on investment and growth of the structural reform programmes which many African countries had undertaken remained disappointing and debt relief through rescheduling had proved to be of little real benefit to African countries which had continued to part with $10 billion a year on debt servicing.

The Ghanaian Deputy Minister said the end of the Cold war had not brought peace to the world. The world was experiencing simmering disputes, violent conflicts, aggression and foreign occupation, interference in the internal affairs of states, ethnic strife and religious intolerance, new forms of racism and narrowly conceived nationalism. In Africa, he cited several conflict situations which deserved the Organization's attention, including Sudan, Somalia and Liberia, where he said it was imperative that the United Nations assume its responsibilities since the crisis there was far from over.

Yousef Bin Abdullah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Oman, noting that the Gulf area had been vulnerable to security and environmental risks as witnessed by the Iran/Iraq war and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, told the Assembly Friday night that the region had emerged stronger and more integrated than ever before due to the overwhelming support of the international community.

However, he said, still unsettled regional and traditional differences could contribute to instability in the area. At the beginning of the current month, he went on, the United Arab Emirates had announced that, in spite of the efforts to reach an agreement with Iran, no conclusive results had been reached with respect to their three Gulf islands: Abu Musa, Tamb "Al Sughra", and Tamb "Al Kubra". His Government called on Iran, with which it had friendly ties and mutual interests, to settle those disputes through peaceful means in a way that would guarantee the common interest of the Gulf Cooperation Council States.

On the Palestinian question, the Foreign Minister of Oman said peace would be impossible without a satisfactory solution to the problem which was the crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict - the Palestinian issue. Oman welcomed and participated in the Middle East Peace Conference sponsored by the United States and the Russian Federation. His country had also taken part in the multilateral negotiations of the Conference, believing as it did in the importance of direct negotiations.

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Jon Baldwin Hannibalsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, told the Assembly on Friday that while a great deal had recently been achieved, and hopes had been raised for the future of the Organization, serious stumbling-blocks remained on the road to genuine peace and security.

To overcome those barriers required a redoubled effort by the world community and its individual member States, he said. Reduction in nuclear arsenals would take years to accomplish. In the meantime, proliferation of dangerous weapons would continue apace, unless effective measures were taken to combat that menace effectively. If those efforts failed, although the world might become less dependent on nuclear weapons, it might become less stable and more militarized.

The Minister also spoke about the concern caused by the continued stationing of foreign troops on the soil of the three Baltic countries - Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - and recalled that last month the Prime Ministers of the five Nordic countries had emphasized that the earliest withrawal of foreign military forces from those countries would contribute to the stability of the region..

The Government of Swaziland had been constantly supporting a peaceful process, through negotiation, towards the establishment of a new South Africa, whose guiding principles would be acceptable to all parties, Obed Mfanyana Dlamini, Prime Minister of Swaziland, told the Assembly on Friday. He welcomed the initiative of the United Nations in dispatching a team of observers to South Africa, to assess the violence in the townships and urged all political leaders in that country to set aside their differences and to return to the negotiating table, in a spirit of compromise and conciliation.

Speaking about the situation in Mozambique, Swaziland's other neighbour, the Prime Minister said the crisis there had enormous, direct bearing on Swaziland's own situation. At least 80,000 Mozambican refugees currently enjoyed Swazi hospitality, at continuing expense to its national economy. Swaziland also welcomed the end of hostilities in Angola, he said, expressing his hope for a successful outcome of the election process in that country.

In his statement to the Assembly on Friday night, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Cooperation of Luxembourg, Jacques F. Poos, said the problems posed by the presence of minorities in the Republics of the former Yugoslavia could not be resolved by military intervention, but rather by negotiated arrangements along the lines proposed by the European Community last November.

The question of minorities must be solved on the basis of a series of principles, Mr. Poos noted, including the refusal to allow frontiers to be altered by force. Minorities must be granted special status guaranteeing their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity, he said. There must also be transborder cooperation agreements to allow minorities to maintain contact with their counterparts in neighbouring countries.

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On the issue of development aid, Mr. Poos said Luxembourg had decided to increase substantially the amount of its aid for humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. His Government would cooperate with all those interested in promoting human development, transparency and honesty in the management of public affairs, the participation of women in development and general respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Pascoal Manual Mocumbi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mozambique, told the Assembly that Southern Africa was struggling to build and reaffirm its political, economic and social identity and expressed concern about the recurrence of violence in South Africa. Speaking of the drought in the Southern African region, "which was unprecedented, with no parallel in living memory", he said it was particularly grave in the case of Mozambique, where war had been ravaging the country for 16 years. The economic cost of that war, which had claimed hundreds of thousands of human lives, had been estimated at about $20 billion.

However, the Minister said that "never before in the history of the conflict had peace and conciliation amongst all Mozambicans been so close". Direct negotiations between the Government and RENAMO to find a political settlement to the conflict had been underway for two years now, he said. And, since last June, the United Nations, France, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States had been participating as observers in the peace process.

More recently, he said, on 18 September, the Head of State of Mozambique and the RENAMO leader met once again in Gaborone, Botswana, in order to address the issues which were deadlocked on the agenda of the Rome negotiations. The meeting reaffirmed 1 October as the deadline for the signing of the General Peace Agreement in Mozambique, and those issues were resolved.

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The Co-chairmen of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia, Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, traveled to Belgrade today for a full day of meetings to follow up on specific aspects of the joint communiqué issued at the time of their last visit two weeks ago, and to discuss important matters concerning United Nations protected areas and parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

According to a statement issued in Geneva yesterday, it was hoped that the visit would result in a final agreement on a demilitarization plan for the Prevlaka Peninsula which, once approved by the Security Council and implemented, could restore peace to the Dubrovnik area. The Co-Chairmen were holding meetings today with President Cosic, Prime Minister Panic, and President Milosevic, as well as other military and humanitarian officials.

Upon his return from Zagreb to Geneva on Saturday, 26 September, Mr. Vance told correspondents that he favoured an immediate resumption of aid flights to Sarajevo. The humanitarian situation there was acute, and no time could be wasted any longer, he said.

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At the airport in Zagreb, Lord Owen told the press that reports of ethnic cleansing in the Banja Luka area had been confirmed and that he and Mr. Vance would take up this matter in Belgrade with the authorities there.

In a separate development, the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) has reported that it was now flying a regular shuttle between Zagreb and Sarajevo. The first since 3 September, the UNPROFOR flight left Zagreb on 20 September and returned to the Croatian capital the same day. Such flights, which are only permitted to carry United Nations personnel and logistical material, are proceeding on the basis of written assurances from the three parties to the Yugoslav conflict for the safety of United Nations flights in and out of Sarajevo.

A United Nations official reminded correspondents that the humanitarian flights of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were still suspended. High Commissioner Sadako Ogata was still in touch with the Governments of the contributing countries which had not yet authorized her to resume humanitarian flights.

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Referring to a letter from the Chargé d'Affaires of Solomon Islands concerning border incidents between the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, in which two citizens of the Solomon Islands were killed, Security Council President José Ayala Lasso (Ecuador) said in a press statement today that he had stressed the importance of using all existing bilateral means to peacefully resolve such incidents. The comments were made in connection with a meeting held by the Council President on 24 September with the Deputy Prime Minister and Permanent Representative to the United Nations of Papua New Guinea.

The Council President said the Government of Papua New Guinea had condemned the incident and had issued an apology and, once the incident was verified, it would be prepared to make appropriate compensations. It had also dispatched its Foreign Minister to the Island to investigate the incident, he said. In addition, Papua New Guinea had recalled and reprimanded the Commander and troops involved who would be dealt with under the laws of the country.

Council President Ayala Lasso said he had also met with the Chargé d'affaires of the Solomon Islands who had confirmed the bilateral contacts between the two countries towards the solution to "this unfortunate incident". He had also confirmed the Papua New Guinea had recognized the participation of its troops and offered to pay due compensation.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met Friday, 25 September, with the Foreign Minister of Iraq, Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, to discuss the winter programme for north-east Iraq and the Memorandum of Understanding for United Nations humanitarian assistance to that country.

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According to a press release issued on Friday, consultations will continue early this week.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) -- the food aid organization of the United Nations -- has announced the loading of a vessel with 600 metric tonnes of emergency food aid for Croatia, which will transit through the new Main-Danube canal linking northern Europe with the Black Sea.

In a press release issued in Rome on Friday, 25 September, World Food Programme Executive Director Catherine Bertini expressed the hope that this first test shipment through the new canal would pave the way for other donors to use the route and provide an efficient alternative route to transport food to people in need in the region. Even if the canal voyage takes longer, she said, the barges could move a lot more food than by road.

The route of the barge, which left on 15 September, will take it through Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Hungary where the food is expected on 2 october with transhipment to Zagreb immediately after.

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Strengthening global cooperation in nuclear safety, radiological protection and the application of safeguards to verify the peaceful uses of nuclear energy were among a number of texts introduced during the thirty-sixth General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which ended its session last Friday. The Vienna meeting was attended by delegates from more than than 90 countries.

Among resolutions adopted was one on measures to strengthen international cooperation relating to nuclear safety and radiological protection which urged the IAEA Board of Governors and Director General to intensify actions to develop a common basis for acceptable safety levels of all operating nuclear power plants built to earlier standards.

A resolution on South Africa's nuclear capabilities requested countries to continue cooperation with the Agency in implementing a safeguards agreement. It also requested the IAEA's Director General to assist African States in their efforts towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, and to report on progress on "the denuclearization of Africa" to the IAEA Board of Governors and the General Conference.

Another resolution condemned Iraq's non-compliance with its safeguards obligations and demanded that it "immediately and fully comply" with all of its obligations under its safeguards agreement with the Agency and under relevant Security Council resolutions.

The IAEA also adopted 1993 budget expenditures of $191 million.

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